DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 550 CS 001 491

AUTHOR Taschow, Horst G.
TITLE A Comparative Study of Diagnosis and Therapy in Children with Reading Deficiencies in the German and English Language.
PUB DATE Aug 74
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the International Reading Association World Congress on Reading (5th, Vienna, Austria, August 12-14, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Abstraction Levels; Bilingualism; *Bilingual Students; Elementary Education; *German; *Language Proficiency; Reading; *Reading Comprehension; *Reading Research; Teacher Education; Translation; Word Recognition

ABSTRACT

Twenty-three German-English bilingual boys and girls, ranging from grades three to six in Saskatchewan's schools, were used in this study which sought to investigate their reading behavior when reading English passages. The Individual Reading Inventory, administered in both languages, indicated that comprehension after oral and silent reading in English lagged significantly behind the comprehension shown in German. Tasks calling for word recognition indicated that subjects could recognize and pronounce the words in the English reading passages. Subjects mastered English-to-German-to-English translations with concrete samples, but were dissatisfied when they applied the same procedure to sentences with abstract connotations. When further abstract sentences were examined, students resorted to manipulating words in order to attain meaning. Pedagogical changes suggested by the study include preparation (exposing the bilingual student to main ideas of the new reading-learning experience), direction (directing the bilingual student to silent reading), discussion (challenging the bilingual student to use the weaker language in a discussion of the silently read passage), and application (letting the bilingual students expand and refine their own language facilities). (HOD)

ED 098550

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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPY IN CHILDREN WITH READING DEFICIENCIES IN THE GERMAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE .

by

Dr. Horst G. Taschow
Associate Professor of Education
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan

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The Fifth IRA World Congress on Reading
Session: Perspective H-Comparative Education
Part II, 11:00 - 12:30
Wednesday, August 14, 1974
Vienna, Austria, August 12 - 14, 1974

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Dr. Horst G. Taschow
Associate Professor of Education
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF DIAGNOSIS AND THERAPY IN CHILDREN WITH READING DEFICIENCIES IN THE GERMAN AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Numerous studies in the World Literature on Reading have reported on reading difficulties and disabilities, an Leseschwierigkeiten und Legasthenie and de l'instruction corrective on réparatrice et rémedier a la difficulté on lecture. Other studies have voiced concern about reading deficiencies bilinguals encounter in different parts of the world when being compelled to read and to learn in the language of monocultural and monolingual school systems. Questions must be raised how do binlingual students think when being subjected to read for understanding in the weaker language of the unilingual textbooks? How are bilinguals handling the stronger versus the weaker language?

This study addressed itself to what may cause the plight of the bilinguals and attempted, therefore, to investigate their dual-language behaviours and from what has been learned to make practical recommendations for teacher education to assist bilinguals.

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Origin of the Study

This study began with the question "How can the monolingual classroom teacher in a multicultural setting help German-English bilinguals to understand better what they have to read in the English language?" Twenty-three German-English bilingual boys and girls, ranging from grades three to six in Saskatchewan's public and separate schools, worked over a period of one year with the investigator.

Introductory Diagnostic Treatment

Biometric eye measurements in reading silently 100-word sample target cards in English did not reveal unusual discrepancies from the Reading-Eye Reading Performance Profile(11) except for reading comprehension which, measured by ten yes-no answers, fell below the 70 percent minimum performance. The 100-word English passages of the target cards were then translated into German passages of equal length and ten words per line. The results showed increases in comprehension after silent reading with scores ranging from 60 to 100 per cent.

Succeeding this procedure an Individual Reading Inventory(I.R.I.) (1,5,10) was constructed in the English language and the same inventory was translated into German. Both were administered to the subjects. Again it became apparent that comprehension after oral and silent reading in English lacked significantly behind the comprehension shown in German. To analyze the English meaning gap in greater detail, all the words contained in the oral and silent reading passages in the I.R.I. were arranged in frequency occurrences and then checked against the Thorndike-Lorge List to ascertain difficulty ratings. The words were arranged in a stimulus-response pattern and

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administered to the subjects. This procedure revealed the subjects abilities to recognize and pronounce each word in the passages. From these word recognition performances it was soon evidenced that the subjects knew most of the words, although pronunciation time was longer than when compared with English monogolots. Nevertheless, results indicated that subjects could recognize and pronounce the words in the English oral and silent reading passages.

Word Matching

Next, the question was asked: how successful could subjects apply the mental processes of giving meaning to the printed words ? Since meaning comes from the reader's background experiences, it was thought that the answers would give some insight as to what each reader does with each word. Subjects were given the list of words recognized and pronounced earlier and were asked to say each word and then tell what it meant by using the word in a sentence. The responses were taperecorded and later examined. Oral responses led to the conclusion that there were no significant differences when compared with those of the English monoglots.

Then words like run, heavy, and broke were used in sentences in which each of the three words had more than one connotation. The sentences were arranged in order from concrete to abstract. Thus:

The man carries a heavy load on his back.
The man carries a heavy load through life.

John and Paul run to the store.
It was the usual run of the mill.

Lena broke the glass.
Bill broke the rule.

How did the subjects arrive at the English meaning ? Subjects

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translated the English sentences in direct word cluster relationships into the German language, applied German meaning from their stronger background experiences and transferred the German understanding back to match the words in the English sentence. Translation in cluster relationship in form of word matching is demonstrated in the following example:

Figure 1: Word-Cluster Relationships

	1	2	3	4
English Reading:	The man	carries	a heavy load	on his back
German Translation:*	Der Mann	trägt	eine schwere Last	auf seinem Rücken
German-English Meaning:	The man carries a heavy load on his back.			

*In spite that the German word order is incorrect, the German translation conveys adequate understanding

It appeared that the subjects concluded when the sentence means something in German, it must also mean something, perhaps the same, in English. Tney generally agreed that it could not mean anything else. Could it be that the stronger language controls the thinking ? When asked why they had translated the English words The man together, subjects replied that it is Der Mann and ~~nicht~~ not 'die' or 'das' Mann. The German language makes a grammatical distinction rather than a natural distinction for the genders. Similar comments were made for cluster relationships 3 and 4.

Words That Do Not Match

While the English to German to English translations had worked successfully with the concrete samples, the same procedures applied to sentences with abstract connotations did not work. In The man carries a heavy load through life the subjects were obviously dissatisfied with the outcome of their efforts by saying:'it doesn't sound

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right,' 'das sagt man nicht so' (one doesn't say this in German), 'that is what I don't know in school.' Some asked:'Why would a man always carry a heavy load through life? What would he carry? He is not the man in the moon - or is he?' These questions indicated that concrete rather than abstract connotations were applied. Similar attempts were observed in the run of the mill which in German is not das Rennen der Mühle. Perhaps, it is at this point where the transfer of meaning from the stronger into the weaker language ends. The mill in German does not run but clatter, that is klappern, and in English the mill does not clatter but run. Terminology, syntactical and grammatical differences between the two languages became at least stumbling stones in verbatim translation.

In the effort to match word for word it was evidenced that sentences with concrete connotations were correctly translated via German back to English because the German background was identical to the English message conveyed in the sentences. But in sentences with abstract connotations it became apparent that verbatim translations did not produce the understanding of the English sentences.

Word Manipulation

When further sentences with abstract connotations were examined, students resorted to manipulating words in order to attain meaning.

In the examples The voters registered a heavy vote, Joe broke the bank at Monte Carlo, Old Mr. Brown was a man who often flew off the handle(3) and Susi turned the tables on her sisters, the English words were translated one by one only to find that, when put together, the sentences lacked German meaning. In their given order German word matching did not produce understanding by saying Die Wähler verzeichneten eine schwere Wahlstimme, Joseph brach die Bank von Monte Carlo, Ein alter Herr Braun war ein Mann der oft wegwarf den Stiel, and Susi drehte die Tische um ihre Schwestern.

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When the subjects were questioned about the meaning they had given to the English words and how they make sense within the whole sentences, subjects manipulated words to bring sense about. Thus, Susi places the tables at the side where the sisters are sitting, or places the tables closer to the sisters. The German translation of on as um may in fact hint at word manipulation to establish meaning forcefully by moving the tables around the sisters. When questioned about the phrase flew off the handle, explanations were offered that handle in English means Henkel or Stiel in German and flew is flog which, so it was agreed, did not make sense in German and therefore was changed to wegwarf which in English is threw away. Then, so it was argued, the English sentence makes sense after all 'Herr Braun warf oft die Stiele weg'. For justification an additional explanation was offered that, perhaps, old Mr. Brown did not like handles or, may be, particular kinds of handles. The understanding of the English sentence broke the bank was thought to mean that Joseph apparently brach ein in die Bank, that is, entered the bank with the added explanation that he wanted to take or steal the money or to rob the bank. But as one subject volunteered to say Joseph did not holdup the bank.

How did the bilinguals arrive at the comprehension in the English language ? When the same language operations as described in Figure 1 were applied to the above given sentences, the subjects hesitated, sometimes abandoned cluster translation, examined single words and re-examined German meanings. As a result of this German words were manipulated to accom modate better German understanding which was then transferred to fit the English sentence. Figure 2 tries to demonstrate the English-German-English language word meaning manipulation.

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Figure 2: Word-Cluster Relationships

		1	2	3	4
English	Reading:	Joe	broke	the bank	at Monte Carlo.
German	Translation:	Joseph	brach	die Bank	von Monte Carlo.
Meaning Manipulation:			brach ein in		
Changed German-English	Meaning :	Joe	broke into	the bank	at Monte Carlo.

In the completed manipulation the rootword brach(German), broke(English) has been maintained in both languages to which in German the separable prefix ein and the preposition in have been added resulting in the new English word into. Relating the new meaning structured through German language manipulations to the given English sentence, the sentence would convey Joe's intent to rob the bank which differed markedly from the original English sentence.

What can be concluded from the results of these samples is that the subjects translated a word or word cluster from English into German, then associated German meaning experiences and, lacking sufficient English language experience, accepted the German version instead. Did they actually try to tailor the weaker language background through meaning manipulation derived from the stronger language background ? How were these students able to get into higher grades ? May be the requirements in the lower grades were within their limited English language-power and may be they had benefitted from frequent and repetitious seat work. When, however, the subjects reached the upper elementary grades the traditional textbooks written for monoglots of the Anglo-Canadian and Anglo-American cultures became too difficult; perhaps, even too difficult for some

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of the German speaking parents to help their children. As for the teac rs they were unilingual and had little or no awareness of the multi-lingual mixture in the classrooms in which traditional lesson plans were taught "as if all the students were profiting from the lesson"(12).

Therapy Recommendations

Moderate changes(2) are suggested in the pedagogical philosophy of traditional teacher education in colleges and universities and in the minds of those who shoulder responsibilities for global teacher education anywhere. Instead of making teachers the disseminators of interminable unilingual monologues which bilinguals may not always be able to follow and understand, global teacher education should train teachers to learn to listen to the bilingual student, talk with him and observe how he learns(4). In such learning-centered situation the bilingual is given fullest opportunity to act upon the materials to be assimilated and accommodated for learning which, when supported by independent questioning, will strengthen the weaker language background experiences. It is then hoped that teachers begin to understand how bilinguals learn and how to broaden and deepen their intellectual horizons beyond the limits of their own language and culture by seeking out and making available manifold and purposeful opportunities for them to grow into the national language, step by step, until this language becomes their own(9).

To realize this goal, teachers must be reached anywhere. They will be reached when theory turns practice inopening up feasable instructional avenues that can be incorporated immediately within the multi-faceted global schoolteaching methods and procedures. This study, therefore, recommends four steps:

1. Preparation - Préparation - Präparation
2. Direction - Direction - Direktion
3. Discussion - Discussion - Diskussion
4. Application - Application - Applikation

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Implementing the Steps

1. Preparation: The bilingual is exposed to main ideas of the new reading-learning experience. A question like 'what do you know about it ?' will start exploration of background experiences as well as of meaning resources in the weaker language. Auditory discrimination is activated by clear enunciation leading to imitate correct soundgestalt of words.

During background explorations new words are vocally introduced and written on the chalkboard for visual inspection. Meaning is established either from context, through listening and discussing with other monoglots or, as a last resort, through teacher informations. Time to think must be generously given and encouragement always be extended so that bilinguals can make language-meaning-comprehension comparisons with the stronger language as long and often as they need it.

Based on the foregoing, the purpose for reading is set. This is difficult-even for the monoglots-and needs in the beginning much help. Efficient teacher questioning(8) is a necessary prerequisite to accomplish this goal. It is important for the bilingual because it helps to build up syntactical and grammatical facilities in the weaker language.

2. Direction: Through the learner-centered activities in Preparation the bilingual's weaker language has been directed towards the assigned silent reading task which should in length be appropriate to its purpose. Silent reading receives encouragement from within the reader because he has reached equilibrium through assimilation and accommodation of old and new meanings already known and learned

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respectively. In addition, teacher observation during silent reading will give assurance to the student should unforseen comprehension uncertainties arise and will provide extra time for the teacher to spot obstructing and distracting reading symptons.

3.Discussion: The bilingual is challenged to use the weaker language to its fullest extent by discussing what he has read silently. To encourage vocal expression, fact-, vocabulary- and inference questions are recommended. Examples are: Fact question - What did Joe do?, Vocabulary question - What is the meaning of the phrase 'run of the mill' as used in this sentence?, and Inference question - What would you have done if you had been in Bill's place? This kind of questioning leads and guides the reader from literal to critical reading to think. In seeking answers to questions when correct recall fails, oral re-reading for specific purposes is employed. Purposeful oral re-reading aids to reinforce the weaker language-meaning-comprehension facilities, to verify doubtful or incorrect answers and to recover already forgotten or even overlooked words, phrases, idiomatic expression and other informations. It is at this point that unilingual teachers should restrain themselves from simply supplying answers, rushing the students and becoming impatient. Instead, the teachers need to teach themselves that the bilinguals depend upon their support to grow into the weaker language through their own efforts rather than being forced into from without.

4.Application: Difficulties that had been experienced in the language-meaning-comprehension processes during the foregoing steps should be improved with help from either the teacher or a competent unilingual student tutor. The aim in offering help should be primarily directed towards widening background experiences in the

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weaker language in order to let the bilinguals expand and refine their own language facilities. While the growing into the weaker language must be regarded as the primary activity the bilingual is exposed to, word recognition and comprehension skills become secondary activities which, nevertheless, must supplement the primary one. When engaged in the secondary activities, it should be observed that they should not be taught in isolated drill fashion. The latter may, indeed, not only hinder and interfere with but also obstruct and destroy healthy inner growth of the weaker language.

Conclusion

This study purported that bilinguals are unjustifiably hindered in their reading progress and proficiency by monocultural and monolinguistic oriented school systems. Other bilingual studies have expressed similar concerns(6,7). This study then called for teachers who are willing to assist bilinguals not just to survive among monoglots but to grow into the weaker language and to make it their own. To assist in reaching this goal, the study recommended basic reading-learning principles outlined in four steps for the use of unilingual teachers in unilingual classroom instruction. It is then hoped that this study kindles further research on how to improve reading instruction for bilinguals in monocultural and monolingual societies in order to enable them to develop more securely towards their own self-realization and to become world citizens in the search for lasting world peace.

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